



August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area
Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center
Rockwoods Reservation



Making Tracks

December 2002

Volume 02, Number 12

Holiday Trees for the Birds

By Nancy Snider, Conservation Education Consultant

As we prepare for the holidays, let us take a moment to remember the birds that spend the winter with us. An old Christmas custom in Germany was to hang food for birds on a tree. Norwegian tradition called for sheaves of wheat to be tied to a pole during winter feasts so birds could join in the merriment and food. Today, we can continue this tradition in our own yards by decorating trees with special treats for the birds.

Creating special treats and then decorating trees can provide hours of family fun. Simple feeders can be made by using common items found around the house. Do you have an empty milk jug? (Yes, that does mean “drink the milk first!”) If so, you can use it to create a bird feeder in four simple steps. First, clean the jug thoroughly! Next, cut large rectangles from both sides. Then, fill the bottom with bird seed. Tie one end of a string around the milk jug handle. Use the other end of the string to tie it to a tree. Viola! This same method can be used to create feeders from almost any plastic or paper container.

Another simple bird feeder can be made from pine cones. Tie a piece of yarn at least 6 inches long to the end of a pine cone. Use a spoon to push peanut butter between the tips of the pine cone. Now roll the pine cone in bird seed. Hang your finished creation on a tree.

Garlands are also fun to make. String together seeds and fruits, such as peanuts in the shell, fruit slices, raisins or cranberries, then hang them on the tree. Nuthatches and woodpeckers will enjoy the peanuts while blue jays and mockingbirds will enjoy the fruit. Treats for insect-eating birds such as woodpeckers and nuthatches also can be made by placing suet (animal fat) in old mesh onion bags and hanging them from tree limbs. Suet can be obtained from most grocery meat departments.

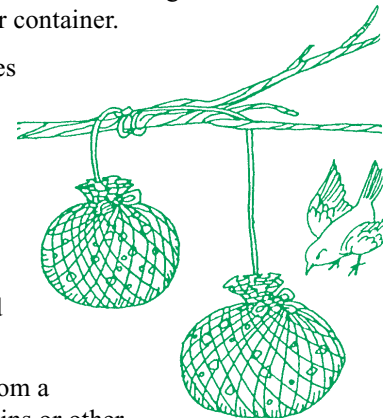
Remember that some birds, like sparrows and juncos, feed on the ground and will not eat from a feeder hanging in a tree. Seed can be sprinkled on the ground for them or placed in old pie tins or other shallow trays. Use your imagination! What kinds of feeders can *you* create? What other bird-edible decorations can you invent? Remember that although birds will eat bread, common white bread is not very nutritious for them. They need the protein and fat that seeds provide. Bread should only be used sparingly, as a possible base for seeds, if at all.

Bird feeding can provide hours of entertainment and education. To learn more about bird feeding and winter birds that may visit your feeder, check out the free publications, *Winter Birds* and *Backyard Bird Feeding*. These publications are available from the Missouri Department of Conservation at Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center, Busch Conservation Area and Rockwoods Reservation.

Want to learn more?

Check out the bird-watching programs and nature walks at Busch Conservation Area on December 18 and 21. See pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter for more information about these programs.

If you are interested in studying winter birds at home and being part of a nationwide survey, check out Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology web page, Project Feeder Watch at <http://birds.cornell.edu/PFW>. Cornell also offers a curriculum and classroom feeder watch program. Information about Classroom Feeder Watch can be found at <http://birds.cornell.edu/cfw>.



News from

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center

Meet James D. Wilson

Author of *Common Birds of North America – Midwest Edition*

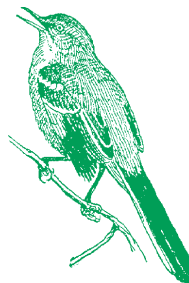
Book-Signing in Lobby
Saturday, Dec. 7
10 a.m. to Noon

James D. Wilson will be signing his book in the lobby at Powder Valley on December 7. A self-taught artist, Wilson has been drawing since childhood. In addition to acrylic, the medium used in his books, he works in pencil, pen and ink and watercolor.

For 24 years Wilson was State Ornithologist with the Missouri Department of Conservation. His articles have been published in several journals, including the *Missouri Conservationist*. He has published several other books on bird identification and bird life history.

Come visit with James D. Wilson and have your copy of *Common Birds of North America – Midwest Edition* signed by the author. Books will be available for purchase from our gift shop.

No reservations necessary!



11715 Cragwold Road
Kirkwood, MO 63122
(314) 301 - 1500

LOCATION:

From I-44 east in Kirkwood, take Watson Road, exit and turn north on Geyer Road. Follow Geyer Road 200 yards to Cragwold Road. Go 1 mile west on Cragwold Road.

AREA HOURS:

Daylight Saving Time:

8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Central Standard Time:

8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

NATURE CENTER

HOURS:

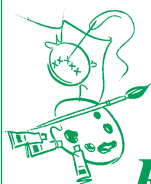
Open all year, 7 days a week,
 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

GIFT SHOP HOURS:

Open all year, 7 days a week,
 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

ABOUT THE AREA:

112 acres of forestland and winding creeks, three hiking trails (one wheelchair accessible). Open to visitors free of charge.



Resident Artisan

Lynda Rosenthal
Woodburning Wildlife

Demonstration in Lobby

Saturday, Dec. 14

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 15

Noon to 4 p.m.



Freelance artist Lynda Rosenthal will once again be in our lobby demonstrating woodburning techniques with Missouri flora and fauna themes. Come learn this timeless skill as Lynda demonstrates how to turn basswood into charming wildlife pieces. Finished pieces will be available for purchase.

No reservations necessary!

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center will close at Noon on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

Powder Valley Gift Shop

Need a holiday gift idea or great stocking stuffer? Check out our Take-Along Guides, available at the gift shop for \$7.95 each.

Birds, Nests and Eggs
 Trees, Leaves and Bark
 Snakes, Salamanders and Lizards
 Wildflowers, Blooms and Blossoms
 Rocks, Fossils and Arrowheads
 Caterpillars, Bugs and Butterflies
 Tracks, Scat and Signs

Remember! All profits from the sale of our Gift Shop merchandise are used to fund conservation programs.

News from

Rockwoods Reservation


Look for Me in the Prairie

By Erin Connett, Naturalist

Prairies are great areas to visit — especially in the winter. Not only do they display their exquisite beauty, but they have an abundance of wildlife. Numerous species of birds winter in prairie areas, having migrated south to escape the harsh weather in the northern United States and Canada.

Sparrows are quite common in prairies because they will feed off grass seeds. American tree sparrows, white-crowned sparrows, white-throated sparrows, song sparrows and savannah sparrows are among the most common sparrows to see. Lapland longspurs are unusual birds that you may get to see if it gets really cold. They look very similar to sparrows but have a rusty-colored bar on the wings along with a buff-colored cheek patch.

Birds of prey are quite common around prairies, which provide a smorgasbord of mice, voles and rats to nourish them. Northern harriers are hawks that hover just inches over the top of the grass searching for prey. The Harrier jet was actually named after this bird because of how close they can soar to the grass. Their owl-shaped disk face helps them to see and hear prey running beneath them. Short-eared owls are also quite common in the colder winter months. They are one of the few owl species that are more diurnal than nocturnal. Their football helmet-shaped heads are accented with two large black circles around their eyes to help reduce the glare from the sun.

Visit your local prairie habitat area this month. For the best identifications of these birds, check out *The Sibley Guide to Birds* or *The Field Guide to the Birds of North America* from National Geographic. You may be very surprised at what you find! 



The Holidays Are Over — What Do I Do With My Tree?


By Tom Meister, Interpretive Programs Supervisor

As the holidays wind down each year, we are left with a tree and a question: “What can I do with it?” The answer is recycling your tree. One of the easiest ways is to make a brush pile in your backyard. Nearly all animals need cover to escape from predators, rest in safety, nest and raise their young. Brush piles represent an important cover to several species of small mammals, ground-nesting birds, amphibians and reptiles. Discarded Christmas trees, without tinsel, make ideal brush piles that will last several years. To make them even more effective, place an old pallet or similar material on the ground and pile the trees on top.



Proper placement of brush piles allows relatively safe access to food sources and permits wildlife to forage over a large area. Brush piles should be placed at intervals near feeding areas, along field borders and within idle fields. Avoid the bottoms of drainages and low spots where water might render the brush pile useless.

If you have a pond or lake or if there is one in your neighborhood, brush piles also can provide important habitat for fish. They too need cover so they can escape from predators and rest in safety.

If you don't have a pond or an area to build a brush pile, you can still contribute to recycling and improving wildlife habitat by bringing your tree to Rockwoods Reservation. We will use some of the trees to construct brush piles for wildlife habitat on our area. The remaining trees will be chipped into mulch that will be available to the public for free! Before dropping off your tree for recycling, please remove tinsel, ornaments and the plastic bag in which you transported it. For a list of nearby sites where you can recycle your tree or for additional information, contact Rockwoods Reservation at (636) 458-2236. 

**2751 Glencoe Road
Wildwood, MO 63038
(636) 458 - 2236**

LOCATION:

From I-44, take Hwy. 109 (Eureka exit) north 4 miles to Woods Avenue; left on Woods Avenue, and then immediately right on Glencoe Road; follow signs.

From Hwy 40 (I-64), take Clarkson Road south to Manchester Road; right (west) on Manchester to Hwy. 109; left (south) on Hwy. 109, 2 miles to Woods Avenue; right on Woods Avenue, and then immediately right on Glencoe Road; follow signs.

From Manchester Road, take Hwy. 109 south 2 miles to Woods Avenue; right on Woods Avenue, and immediately right on Glencoe Road; follow signs.

AREA HOURS:

Sunrise until 1/2 hour after sunset.

VISITOR CENTER HOURS:

Open seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., during March, April, May, June, September and October. The Visitor Center will be closed on weekends during July, August, November, December, January and February.

ABOUT THE AREA:

All facilities are free to the public, including:

- *Education Center with exhibits and interpretive programs.
- *1,898 acres of rugged, mostly hardwood, forested land interspersed with springs and streams.
- *Three picnic areas (all with charcoal grills), two with drinking water, tables, and one with toilets.
- *Seven trails (one is self-guided and wheelchair accessible) totaling more than 10 miles.

How to register for a **DECEMBER** program

Reservations are required unless otherwise specified. Reservations will be taken Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Programs are intended for individuals and families only. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel your reservation as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Please limit requests to two programs per month, with only one to include an Ages 3-6 program. **Please be prompt. Arrival after 10 minutes may exclude you from the program.** Interpreting services are available for people with hearing loss, with five days advance notice.

ROCKWOODS

For reservations, call (636) 458 - 2236

6 Toddling Into Nature Cooking Critter Cookies

Friday 10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.
& 1:15 p.m. – 2: 15 p.m.

(Ages 3-6) During the cold winter months what do wild animals eat? Learn what wildlife need to eat to stay warm in the winter and create energy snacks to attract wildlife to your backyard. Dress for a mess. (Reservations begin November 22.)



12&19 Mosaic Stepping Stones

Thursday 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
(Ages 7 and up) Create decorative stones for the garden. All you need to bring are gloves, broken glass, beads and stones. (Reservations begin December 2.)

13 Homeschool Special Trash to Treasures

Friday 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
(Ages 7 -12) Learn about the importance of recycling and create tin can luminaries. Supplies provided. Just bring your imagination! (Reservations begin November 27.)

14 Holiday Gift-Making/ Winter Hike

Saturday 10:30 a.m. – Noon
(Ages 6-12) Parents, leave the kids with us and enjoy a winter hike followed by coffee and hot cocoa. While you hike, we will be making holiday gifts for you!

Kids should dress for a mess and adults, dress for the weather. (Reservations begin November 27.)



AUGUST A. BUSCH SHOOTING RANGE & TRAINING CENTER &

JAY HENGES SHOOTING RANGE & TRAINING CENTER

Both ranges will be closed on December 25 and January 1 for the holidays.

SOULARD OUTDOOR TEACHER RESOURCE CENTER

For reservations, call (314) 231-3803

7 Naturally Crafted

Saturday 10 - 11:30 a.m.
& 1 - 2:30 p.m.

(All Ages) Who needs glitter and tinsel? Craft a seasonal decoration the natural way to give as a gift or to keep for yourself. Materials will be provided. (Reservations begin November 22.)



BUSCH AREA

For reservations, call (636) 441 - 4554

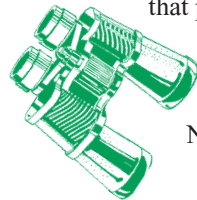
7 Gifts from Nature

Saturday 10 a.m. – Noon
(All Ages) Join us for this informal, go at your own pace program, using natural materials to create holiday gifts and decorations. (Reservations begin November 22.)



14 Binoculars, Spotting Scopes & Tripods

Saturday 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.
(Adults) Are you giving or asking for any of these as a gift this Christmas? Let us help you pick out the right one. We will review the basics of the optics and discuss features and criteria to look for before you make that purchase. Included with this program is a short hike to try out some binocular techniques for bird watching. (Reservations begin November 27.)



17 Rudolph’s Friends in Missouri

Tuesday 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
& 11 a.m. – Noon

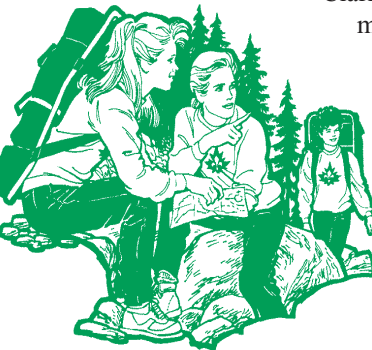
(Ages 3-6) What do the deer in Missouri have in common with reindeer? Come find out and make a craft to take home. (Reservations begin November 26.)

18 Where Do the Birds Go?

Wednesday 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
(Ages 7-12) Let’s talk about the birds that spend the winter in Missouri. We will prepare treats for the birds, then take a hike on the Fallen Oak Trail to learn how to take a bird count. Dress for the weather! Warm cider and cookies will be waiting for us when we are done. (Reservations begin December 4.)

21 Winter Wildlife Hike

Saturday 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
(Adults) Discover the birds and other wildlife that spend the winter at the Weldon Spring Conservation Area as we hike the 5.3-mile Clark Trail. This trail is of moderate difficulty and sturdy shoes are a must. Please dress for the weather. (Reservations begin December 6.)



21 Owl Prowl

Saturday 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
& 7:30 p.m. - 9 p.m.

(All Ages) Join us for an introduction to Missouri’s resident owls and winter visitors. Then take a short stroll on the Fallen Oak Trail to listen and, hopefully, call in some owls close to us. Warm clothing is a must for the walk portion of this program. (Reservations begin December 6.)



POWDER VALLEY

For reservations, call (314) 301 - 1500

7 Holiday Sing-Along

Saturday 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
(All Ages) Join us at the fireplace to sing traditional and conservation holiday tunes. (Reservations begin November 22.)



7 Beaks and Feet Bird Discovery Table

Saturday 10 a.m. - Noon
(All Ages) Why is one beak slender and another beak stout? Why aren’t all bird feet alike? Could the differences have anything to do with bird lifestyles? Visit the bird discovery table and find the answers to these and other questions about beaks and feet. (No reservations necessary.)

8 First Impressions

Sunday 1 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
(All Ages) Many of the feelings we have about wildlife are due to common misconceptions. Learn how some commonly feared animals are important to our environment. (Reservations begin November 22.)

9&16 Traveling the Lewis & Clark Trail

Monday 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
(Adults) A volunteer naturalist who traveled the Lewis and Clark Trail will share his experiences. (Reservations begin November 25 and December 2, respectively.)

10 Who’s Out and About in Winter Time

Tuesday 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.
& 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.

(Ages 3-6) Some animals stay active all winter. Who are they and how do they do it? (Reservations begin November 26.)



Homeschool Programs Winter Wonders

Thursday 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
(Ages 3-6) What’s named after a holiday and stays green even when there’s snow all around? Why a Christmas fern, of course! Learn about these and other wondrous winter plants through story and craft. Dress for the weather because we’ll go outside also. Children must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin December 2.)

12 Green Winter Plants?

Thursday 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
(Ages 7-12) Some ferns and mosses are winter hardy and green. Learn about Christmas ferns, evergreen mosses and even some winter fungi, then go outdoors to look for winter plants. Children must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin December 2.)

14 Holiday Sing-Along

Saturday 3 p.m. - 5 p.m.
(All Ages) Join us at the Nature Center to sing traditional and conservation holiday tunes. (Reservations begin November 29.)



14 Naturally Crafted

Saturday 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
(All Ages) Who needs to go shopping anyway? Come to Powder Valley and make your gifts so they’re naturally crafted. We’ll have the supplies and ideas; all you need is your own creativity. (Reservations begin December 2.)

News from **Busch** Memorial Conservation Area
August A.

Winter Botany

By Kathy Thiele, Naturalist


botany (bot·a·ny) *n.* The study of plant life

winter botany (win·ter bot·a·ny) *n.* ???????????

I don't know about you, but the first time I heard the term "winter botany," I thought, "What is there to study?" I thought of brown grasses, withered leaves and naked trees. **Green** is what botany is supposed to be about, right? So how can we study botany in the winter?

Well, surprise! There **are** some green things out there. There are obvious things like some mosses, ferns and evergreen trees. Then there are plants like winter cress. You're not going to "oooooh" and "ahhhhhhh" at these plants in the winter. They may be in your field or yard but will only be clumps of leaves on the ground — green nonetheless. Heck, you may even find a flowering plant after a warm day or two. Plants don't watch the evening news so they don't realize the weather is only fooling them. Then there are the plants like witchhazel that are **meant** to flower in winter. Trees also are good candidates for study in the winter. We're more likely to notice the bark, twigs and overall shape of the tree with the leaves gone. Their absence makes identification trickier, but it's a way to really get to know trees on a more personal basis. Add some leaves come spring and you'll be a regular expert.

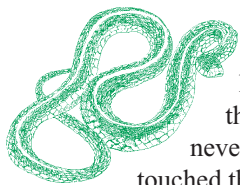
Now about those dead or dead-looking (dormant) plants. Winter gives us an opportunity to check out the parts of plants that we tend to overlook because we're so attracted to the flowers and leaves. Suddenly we notice the seeds, pods, or fruits and the branching of stems. It's real detective work figuring out what some plants looked like when they were green and growing.

Winter botany may not be for those who only like to see the pretty flowers, but it provides a pleasant way to cure cabin fever. Want a challenge? Get off your couch and venture outdoors for winter botany! 

Eew, a Snake!


By Shanna Raeker, Naturalist

Kids can be like little sponges, soaking up everything around them. Believe it or not, they notice when we get excited about seeing a deer, and they notice when we say, "Eew, a snake!" Our actions and behaviors directly impact the children around us. With a little effort, we can convey a positive message about nature to children.



Setting a good example is as easy as watching what we say and do. For example, I had a class of students come to Busch Conservation Area for a program on frogs. I showed the children, teachers and parents live frogs and let them touch if they wanted. The teacher had alluded to me ahead of time that she wasn't crazy about the idea of touching a frog, but you would have never guessed it when I got to her with the frog! She stuck her finger out and touched the frog with a smile on her face. The kids never knew that her stomach was churning on the inside.

Unfortunately, this can work against us too. I remember the time I had a parent refuse to stick her hands in the mud during a pond study. She said it was too gross. Can you guess what her child did? Of course, that child would not touch any of the pond critters, claiming they were too gross.

We should strive to set a positive example for the children around us. I'm not implying that you should pick up the first snake you see and give it a big kiss. Quite the contrary! I'm merely saying that we should allow children to explore nature without any bias we might have. If your children get excited about snakes, let them get excited — even if it makes you cringe. After all, if it weren't for my parents allowing me to explore the natural world, I wouldn't be where I am today. Thanks, Mom and Dad! 



**2360 Highway D
St. Charles, MO
63304
(636) 441 - 4554**

LOCATION:

From Hwy 40, take 94 south to Hwy. D; turn west on D for approx. 1 mile.

From I-70, take 94/First Capitol exit; turn south on Hwy. 94 to Hwy. D; turn west on D for approx. 1 mile. The area entrance is on the north side of Hwy. D.

HOURS:

Area is open from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. See area regulations for special hunt hours. Fishing hours are from 6 a.m. until 9 p.m. Rental boats are available April 1 through September 30. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. It is closed some state holidays.

ABOUT THE AREA:

6,987 acres with 32 lakes and 40 ponds totaling 526 acres of water for fishing. There are six viewing blinds (two are wheelchair accessible), seven hiking trails totaling 5 miles, picnic area, staffed firearms range, and fishing jetties (some are wheelchair accessible). The area has interpretive programs, exhibits and demonstration sites and is used by bicyclists.



The Educators' Niche

By Barb Sandhagen, Education Program Coordinator

It's Only Natural!

Beavers feed, skunks sleep, squirrels gather, bald eagles arrive! What's going on? These are just some of the many natural events that happen during our Missouri Decembers!

Phenology, the study of cyclic events of nature, is a great way to get kids of all ages more environmentally aware, in any classroom setting. Phenology also involves the study of these natural events in response to seasonal and climatic changes in the environment. One of the best ways to get your feet wet in this study is to get a 2003 Missouri Department of Conservation *Natural Events Calendar*.

From the calendar, read or have a student read the natural event of the day. As an example, on December 15 of the 2002 Natural Events Calendar, you'll find, "*Skunks sleep during weather 15° or colder.*" Of course, the events do not occur right **on** the date. You may need to explain that they take place in a general time frame.

Not only are fauna events listed, but those for flora as well. Each month lists "Wildflowers in Bloom" on the left side of the calendar. From a newspaper, have students look up the sunrise and sunset times and the temperature for the day. By posting these each day, students should find a correlation between the number of wildflowers blooming to the temperature and the amount of sunlight each day.

Your budding phenologists can record the season, temperature, sunrise and sunset times on their own natural events chart. For more information, they could research the scientific name for all the flora and fauna listed each month.

These are just a few suggestions. You could also exchange your data with a classroom in a completely different climate. The sky, literally, is the limit to the many ways you can incorporate phenology into your studies!

Check out these websites on phenology:

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/PhenDataExchange.html>

<http://www.sws-wis.com/lifecycles/>

<http://www.earthfoot.org/backyard/phenolgy.html>



the Outdoor Teacher



The Outdoor Teacher Education Resource Center

Hours: Monday - Friday
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
(closed 11 a.m. - Noon for lunch)
1926 S. 12th St.
St. Louis, MO 63104
(314) 231-3803

Word of the Month

Phenology - the study of cyclic events of nature in response to seasonal and climatic changes to the environment.

Noteworthy 🎵 🎵

With the holidays right around the corner, consider giving the 2003 edition of the Missouri Department of Conservation Natural Events Calendar. It's the gift that keeps on giving every month. Some think it's quite a bargain for \$5!

BUSCH RANGE

Hours for December 2002:

10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Friday-Tuesday

Closed Wednesday & Thursday

Closed December 25, 2002,

and January 1, 2003

For more information,
call (636) 441-4554 ext. 251

HENGES RANGE

Hours for December 2002:

10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Wednesday-Sunday

Closed Monday & Tuesday,

Special Events & Holidays

Closed December 25, 2002,

and January 1, 2003

For more information,
call (636) 938-9548



Making Tracks
Missouri Department of Conservation
2360 Hwy D
St. Charles, MO 63304
www.conservation.state.mo.us

PRSRT STD.
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
MO DEPT OF CONSERVATION

Reply Requested

In January 2003, you will receive a postcard asking if you want to remain on the *Making Tracks* mailing list. You'll also have a chance to make any corrections to your name or address. Please take a few moments to complete and return this card.

We hope to hear from you! 

Making Tracks

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Tom Meister

Volunteer Milestones

*Thanks for all your
effort and help!*

Busch Conservation Area

Billy Key.....200 hours

Rockwoods Reservation

Glenda Myers.....1750 hours
John Schroeder.....900 hours
George Triplett.....2100 hours
Jim Westbury.....2200 hours

Powder Valley Nature Center

Warene Anderson.....3300 hours
Carl Combs.....900 hours
Dhaval Desai.....200 hours
Eleanor Ernst.....400 hours
Maury Frein.....200 hours
John Gerwitz.....100 hours
Bill Heady.....600 hours
Mary Hittler.....200 hours
Joan Hummel.....2900 hours
Arta Kirk.....200 hours
Jack McGinnis.....3800 hours
Tjaden Meyer.....2000 hours
Tom O'Gorman.....2500 hours
Jayne Parsons.....1300 hours
Ron Pohle.....900 hours
Dick Wasson.....3500 hours
Neva Wasson.....3500 hours
Ginnie Young.....1400 hours